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Author(s): Ellis Goldberg

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**Ellis Goldberg**

## PEASANTS IN REVOLT — EGYPT 1919

From March until late April 1919 Egypt suffered one of the great peasant revolts of her history and of the 20th century.<sup>1</sup> Contemporaries viewed it as having international importance because it was the result of thirty years of European domination, and its resolution would be likely to affect all Western colonial empires.<sup>2</sup> For us, it marks the emergence of Egyptian liberalism and the construction of the modern state.<sup>3</sup>

The insurrection began when four leaders of the Egyptian national movement were arrested on 9 March 1919. They were then exiled to Malta for insisting that the Egyptian delegation (*wafd*) to the Versailles Conference be recognized, so that it could demand that Egypt be accepted as an independent national state. At that time Egypt's international status was anything but independent: it had still been nominally part of the Ottoman Empire at the outbreak of the war, but it had also been subject to British occupation since 1882, had been declared a Protectorate in 1915, and was slipping into full colonial status.<sup>4</sup>

When the revolt began, rail and communications lines were cut by peasants, and Cairo was isolated from the countryside for weeks. The revolt was only put down when tens of thousands of British troops were sent into the country and, aided by aircraft, restored by force the control of the central government on an essentially unarmed population.

Compared to the other great peasant insurrectionary movements of the 19th and 20th centuries, the Egyptian Revolt of 1919 has been little studied, and consequently our knowledge of it is not very great. Until very recently, the classic work and basic source has been *Thawrat sanat 1919* by 'Abd al-Rahman al-Rafi'i.<sup>5</sup> Without denigrating Rafi'i's work, it is clear that there is room for further study.<sup>6</sup>

What explanations of the Egyptian revolt do we have now? One often mentioned is the anger of the peasants and the urban working masses and their alienation from British colonial officials and British values. It was European Christian domination, rather than the outcomes of the policies of that domination, that evoked peasant rage:

It was none the less an extraordinary piece of folly on our part to make in a Mahomedan country repeated collections, which, under pressure from the local authorities, became really compulsory levies, for the Red Cross, as the mere name lent itself to easy misrepresentation and was in fact suspected of covering some mysterious purpose of sectarian propaganda.<sup>7</sup>

More recently, Reinhard Schulze has argued that the revolt represents a generalized rejection of Western capitalism:

In the country all the different forms of social rebellion of the century before were aroused. The propagated millenarism acted as a replacement of the ‘iddi‘ā’ al-mahdiyya’ . . . Of course this was only the case as far as the oriental society was concerned. Even though the Fallahin never referred to Zaghlul as the Mahdi, one can assume that they regarded the national movement as a new form of millenarism which would at least set them free from the yoke of capitalist agrarian economy and the presence of the colonial state.<sup>8</sup>

Occasionally it is suggested that peasants had their own interests. In one standard account of Egyptian history we read of peasant “dissatisfaction with the inconvenience he experienced . . . in his recruitment to the Labour Corps or when the military authorities found it necessary to requisition his animals and foddors. He had suffered economically.”<sup>9</sup> Another theory is that the revolt was a reaction to the profits reaped by Britain and denied Egyptians when the 1918 cotton crop was bought up at artificially low prices and sold on the open market at extremely high prices.<sup>10</sup>

None of these explanations explain the particular course of the insurrection and especially the persistent attacks on rail and communications lines. And neither do they explain why the peasants voluntarily joined the Labour Corps in the early stages of the war, nor why, if the cross was the symbol so hated by the peasants, there were no attacks on churches, nor Red Cross personnel, nor even very much tension between Copts and Muslims.<sup>11</sup>

I shall propose an alternate theory and another possible sequence of events for 1919, one based on a reinterpretation of the war itself:

The First World War is often depicted as a great industrial war, fought by industrial methods. In fact, given a strong industrial capability on both sides, primary commodities were more decisive: food, industrial raw materials, and that most primary of all commodities, people. Germany did not run out of rifles or shells. It suffered badly from shortages of food. Likewise the Allies: their agrarian resources decided the war. So not only a war of steel and gold, but a war of bread and potatoes.<sup>12</sup>

We need to take the war and the British empire seriously. British officials saw the threat of German victory as real and were determined to get not only the steel and gold but the bread and potatoes to win the war regardless of the local effects of so doing within the empire. Egyptian peasant unrest had more to do with hunger, threatening starvation, apportioning the costs of war-induced inflation, and forced servitude than with foregone opportunity costs or cultural dissonance. The idea that the peasants went hungry may seem strange, for in 1919 they still produced a considerable portion of their food and the rebellion’s slogans spoke of nationalism, not food shortages.<sup>13</sup> Over a third of Egypt’s peasants were paid laborers, however, and even those in the ambiguous situation of sharecroppers might have sold food crops they received in shares in an inflationary market, thereby losing command over food later.<sup>14</sup> Peasants had to tighten their belts and they had good reason to fear that they would go hungry in 1919, and for that reason they attacked the rail lines to prevent the transport of agricultural commodities to the cities.

There is little doubt that aggregate consumption of the ordinary basket of cereals and pulses declined sharply during the war on a per capita basis, hitting bottom around 1918 at roughly 80 percent of average prewar per capita consump-

tion.<sup>15</sup> This declining availability of food can be traced to exports, state procurement policies for the army, and the tax policies of the colonial state which required peasants to sell food to obtain money. In much of rural Egypt peasants were forced to play a cruel game in which those with power attempted to protect themselves from paying the costs of World War I by shifting the costs to other peasants. Not until British military power was weakened somewhat by the war, did revolt become an option.

The Cotton Control Commission purchased the entire cotton crop and shut down the Alexandria Bourse.<sup>16</sup> A Supplies Control Board was also set up (in March 1918) to fix maximum prices in cereals, meat, and other commodities, to acquire hundreds of thousands of tons of supplies directly from the cultivators, and to distribute them in the cities, "taking in hand" the usual distributors.<sup>17</sup> The British also offered wage employment to peasants in the Labour Corps and forcibly recruited them when too few volunteered. British policies included the purchase of foodstuffs and animals as well as their requisitioning at administered prices. Peasants reacted predictably as market prices exceeded set prices: they consumed produce or withheld it. It was understood that, once set in motion, such a dynamic might provoke a major confrontation between the Egyptian population and the British military. By 1917 the British High Command wrote:

It is evident that the production of the cotton and foodstuffs Egypt is required to supply is contingent on the maintenance of equilibrium in the agricultural labour market and of healthy political conditions amongst the native population. The latter consideration might be a strong argument against conscription and mobilization in a European sense of the country's resources.<sup>18</sup>

Whether out of short institutional memory, pressing needs in the European theaters, or complacency about the situation in Egypt, the military authorities pursued just such courses.

I

Cereals were the basic foodstuff of Egypt, but during the war wheat consumption dropped dramatically—from 95.9 kilos per capita in 1913 to 61.7 kilos per capita in 1918—especially in the cities.<sup>19</sup> Disparities between rural and urban dwellers, between rich and poor, between Egyptians and foreign soldiers stationed on Egyptian soil were also apparent: not all could command equal quantities of edible commodities; the consumption of no commodity declined by 30 percent for every resident of Egypt. By the autumn of 1918 the cities were short of food and the effects were spreading to the countryside:

The present shortage of wheat in the larger towns, more particularly Alexandria, is chiefly due to the fact that cultivators and merchants are withholding supplies from the provinces; . . . for though the 1918 crop may be smaller than was at first anticipated and though the peasant class may have consumed more wheat than usual there can be no doubt that large supplies still exist in the country. This withholding is due to hopes entertained by cultivators and merchants that wheat will eventually attain a price far above the maximum tariff price. . . .<sup>20</sup>

Local cereal merchants refused to buy grain for the board because they deemed it unprofitable, and attempts by mudirs armed with the powers of martial law to extract grain failed.<sup>21</sup> Peasants had grown wheat for urban consumption but now began to eat it themselves, partly because of price ceilings and partly because the maize they normally ate had been requisitioned.<sup>22</sup>

Food shortages in Egypt during World War I resulted from a combination of food exports, declines in food directly imported, competition for imported inputs for local food production, and requisitions of local food. The first three were a direct consequence of the war on the international economy; the fourth arose both from state manipulation of food available for local consumption and its distribution. As there was less food, peasants also found that they had to fight harder to keep their share.<sup>23</sup>

Wheat production in the Allied countries had dropped below the prewar averages. Great Britain and other European countries were cut off from several of their normal sources of supply, notably India, Russia, and Rumania, and the Argentine crop was below normal, events which induced panic.<sup>24</sup> When an Allied shortfall of wheat and flour on the order of 600 million bushels<sup>25</sup> appeared, the effects cascaded through the world grain markets, as grain was bought up (and bid up) wherever it could be found.

Grain exports from Egypt exploded in 1915.<sup>26</sup> Wheat exports, which had never topped 136,000 bushels, jumped to almost 1.8 million bushels in 1915, declined to around 385,000 bushels in 1916, and then to slightly over 120,000 bushels in 1917. Maize exports, which had never been above 180,000 bushels in the previous seven years (and were usually half that) soared to over 1.5 million bushels in 1915, almost 5 million bushels in 1916, and remained at over half a million bushels in 1916. Not until 1918 did maize exports decline to less than 50,000 bushels, which was roughly what they had been in the immediate prewar period. Reserves were thereby depleted.

Why did peasants not begin to grow more cereals (or other food crops) as prices increased? Certainly the British attempted to limit the acreage sown in cotton, a tactic that ought to have worked when coupled with the relatively low local prices available to producers (as opposed to the high prices on the world market). There appear to be several reasons stemming both from the technical problems of agricultural production and from market forces. When the acreage for cotton was reduced, peasants switched to growing *birsim* (fodder) for their animals rather than cereals. They lacked adequate nitrate fertilizer and *birsim* and animal manure both were substitutes.<sup>27</sup> The effect of the shortage of fertilizers was apparent: yields declined during the five years of the war compared to the preceding five years.<sup>28</sup> Nitrates were imported, not manufactured, and in 1918 and 1919 there was no shipping space for them.<sup>29</sup> Because high explosives require nitrate, military demand for the battlefield swamped farm demand.<sup>30</sup>

Intimations of the fertilizer-wheat shortage problem were mentioned as early as May 1918. A memorandum from Prince Kemal al-Din, president of the Sultania Agricultural Society, pointed out that the demand for nitrogen fertilizer had grown sharply during the preceding fifteen years; nitrates had become the preferred fertilizer for wheat with manure remaining in use only for maize.<sup>31</sup> The prince esti-

mated the shortfall in the coming year's wheat crop on the order of 20 percent, if manure were used exclusively and the 60,000 tons of nitrates normally imported were unavailable.<sup>32</sup> Plans to import nitrate for the 1918 crop year were limited to about 17,000 tons and actual imports were only 3,023 metric tons.<sup>33</sup> Administrative attempts to limit the area devoted to cotton appear to have met with little success because growers calculated that the fine would be a minor tax on the profits as world prices soared, while controlled prices on edible perishables significantly reduced the grower's income.<sup>34</sup> As a result, the ratio of cotton area to cultivated area dropped in the earliest years of the war when acreage limitations were imposed, but then cotton area rose again in the 1918–19 crop year until it reached the high side of the prewar decade.<sup>35</sup>

Had fertilizer imports remained at the prewar level, there would still not have been sufficient cereals. Even in 1913, Egypt had to import approximately 260,000 tons of wheat, about one-third of her requirements.<sup>36</sup> The shortage of wheat was therefore due not only to low production and increased exports, but to the impossibility of maintaining normal levels of importation. The crops in the five prewar years had already been insufficient to meet demand when about 9.3 million quintals of wheat were grown on average and another 2.1 million quintals were imported.<sup>37</sup> The five-year average of wheat production during the war remained at the 9.3-million-quintal level, but imports dropped off to 0.2 quintals. Aggregate figures in the five-year period for the war are misleading. In the 1919–20 crop year, wheat production was a low 8.2 million quintals,<sup>38</sup> so imports were particularly missed in that year. As late as November 1919, Lord Curzon was still freeing additional shipping space trying to increase wheat imports to Egypt: "Much of the discontent among townsmen in Egypt is due to the impossibility of obtaining wheat . . . an adequate supply of wheat is of the utmost importance."<sup>39</sup>

When wheat collections had gone beyond the point where civil requirements could be met the 1919 budget included provision for importation to meet the deficit.<sup>40</sup> With less wheat, the demand for maize (heretofore only a peasant food), increased in the state, the towns, and abroad. The 1916 maize crop was already short and briefly led to a ban on exports, but neither the army nor the state was willing to increase production by the "purchase [of] food and fodder crops at prices remunerative to the agriculturalist."<sup>41</sup> Gross maize production went up during the war, when Egypt shifted from being a maize importer to being a maize exporter on the order of 450,000 quintals.<sup>42</sup>

Little has been written about the effects of the purchase and export of the bulk of the cottonseed crop (as opposed to the cotton fiber crop). Cotton contains both seed and lint. The seed is an important foodstuff in Egypt both for its edible oil for humans and as a cake for animal fodder.<sup>43</sup> Only one-third of the big kantar of cotton weighing approximately 315 rotls was lint used for textile production. The remaining 210–15 rotls were oil crushed from seed and the leftover solids used for animal feed.<sup>44</sup> About 90 percent of the seed cake was exported to England just before World War I, but 80 percent of the oil itself remained in Egypt.<sup>45</sup>

The German submarine campaign against Allied shipping had borne sufficient fruit by 1918 that England had an edible oil shortage due mainly to the loss of imports from the United States. To make it up it was decided to import all available

seed from Egypt.<sup>46</sup> By June 1918 the local supply of cottonseed was already inadequate by about 400 tons a month and supplies of soap (also made from cottonseed oil) would be almost immediately exhausted.<sup>47</sup> Within a month a shortage of edible oil "used by all the poorer classes" was reported and it was understood that no substitute was available; olive oil, for example, was more expensive.<sup>48</sup>

By July 1918 strict measures were needed. Local crushers were to be allotted between 150,000 and 185,000 tons of cottonseed, but the crop was first to be requisitioned by the central government at 85 piasters per ardab to ensure that local governments would not favor local consumers.<sup>49</sup> The seed would be sold to local crushers at 110 piasters per ardab and the profits of E £385,000 would be split between the British government and the Egyptian government.<sup>50</sup> Egyptian cottonseed oil consumption was reduced by over 50 percent between 18 September 1918, and 19 April 1919. Edible oil imports ended, but 20 percent of the cottonseed crop was exported.<sup>51</sup> It is no wonder that by December, General Wingate had to request the release of an additional 50,000 tons of seed to local crushers.<sup>52</sup>

Cottonseed was as much a source of contention between Great Britain and the local Egyptian government (even one with a legislative assembly of landowners) as was cotton fiber. It was clear to British officials that no Egyptian legislative assembly would allow the cottonseed crop to be requisitioned in 1919–20, that it would insist on more seed being retained in Egypt, and that it "would also be unwilling to limit the price which the cultivator might obtain."<sup>53</sup> Faced with this likely opposition, Lord Balfour thought that, since England might still need to take the seed crop for her use, the options open were either to retain martial law or to threaten a coal boycott until Egypt agreed to sell its cotton.<sup>54</sup>

Foodstuffs other than cereals and oil were also exported early in the war and requisitioned later, causing shortfalls. The export of onions, which had been significant at least at the turn of the century, declined by about one-half during the war, but this still left Egypt exporting between 30,000 and 60,000 tons of onions a year. Onion exports generally peaked during the late winter and spring months, leaving the country somewhat short in summer. By July 1918, when 5,000 tons of onions were sent to England, profiteering had begun,<sup>55</sup> but it was not until autumn that further exports were prohibited until the new crop was harvested in March 1919<sup>56</sup> in an attempt to safeguard minimal local requirements. Yet at least 250 tons of onions were exported in December 1918.<sup>57</sup> In mid-March the onion-export embargo was lifted, and onions were again to be sent to Great Britain,<sup>58</sup> but the outbreak of the March revolt reduced the quantity. In March and April 1918, 2,250 tons left Egypt; in 1919 it was 312 tons.

Bean shipments tended to follow the pattern of cereals noted earlier: a dramatic increase in exports in the early years of the war followed by an equally dramatic decrease as the current crops and reserves were depleted. Bean exports, which had never topped 600,000 bushels in the six years preceding the war, suddenly grew to over one half million bushels in 1915, declined to half a million bushels in 1916, and then declined again, although they remained over 85,000 bushels in 1918.<sup>59</sup> Thousands of tons of rice and thousands of bushels of beans were also exported in the waning months of 1918.<sup>60</sup> Barley was also bought by the Supplies Control Board at around this time, but the price at which it was ordered for delivery (120

piasters per ardeb) was significantly lower than the 150 piasters it brought on the open market.<sup>61</sup>

In addition to marketed exports in the early years of the war, foodstuffs were requisitioned in its later years. Estimates for 1918 requisitions indicate that Egypt's food consumption would have been reduced an additional 3–10 percent (depending on the crop) by requisitions. Such a reduction may be misleading, however, for by 1918 apparent consumption had declined markedly, as the supply of some foods declined by 15 or 20 percent from aggregate prewar levels while population remained stable or rose. If peasants judged the likely course of the future from the immediate past, then they would have noticed sharply declining levels of available grain. A three-year moving average of wheat, for example, shows that 1917–19 consumption was 86 percent of the 1914–16 average.

The pressure on food first in the cities and then in the countryside was enormous. Imports dropped, production could not keep pace, and some exports actually increased. Conclusive evidence is lacking, but the number of cases of starvation admitted to the Alexandria Government Hospital rose from 25 in 1913 to 192 in 1917, and the number of cases of typhus rose from 158 to 2,844 during the same period.<sup>62</sup> Since hungry people are more likely to become sick than well-fed people, the Alexandria data suggest the likely spread of hunger. Using incidence of disease (in this case typhus) and the price of wheat as predictors for starvation, we get an extremely good fit. Neither typhus nor any other disease causes starvation. Rising prices might well do so, but people are more likely to die of many other causes before they starve (or even get admitted to a hospital). If we simply take disease as one indicator of hunger and price as another, we might expect the two together to predict cases of starvation quite well (though hardly quite as well as they happen to in this case). In consequence, it seems plausible to suggest that the dramatic incidence of disease (influenza) in 1918, when deaths outnumbered births for the only time in at least a quarter of a century, are also indicative of widespread hunger.<sup>63</sup>

The cost of living for peasants and urban laborers measured by government "consumption baskets" also increased. It seems fairly clear that the cost of supporting a Cairene working-class family rose from 198–235 piasters a month between February 1914 and May 1918 to 350–390 piasters per month on the state enforced tariff prices. For peasants the price rise was from 109–143 piasters to 192–253 piasters during the same period.<sup>64</sup> But even these figures tend to underestimate the effects of the war: first, because they are calculated on the basis of controlled prices for 1918, when the actual costs were higher; and second, because peasants' diets are low in fat and high in cereals. They seem to have been at or below what the British authorities called "light labour convict diets."<sup>65</sup>

Not all who lived in Egypt suffered equally: the army had enough; the rich—whether Egyptian or not—could always buy it. Urban workers saw their food supply decline. Peasants meanwhile began to realize that control over physical commodities was more important than any money income derived from their sale, but gaining that control meant conflict with landowners or state officials with requisition orders.<sup>66</sup> Wartime inflation drove prices up threefold in a three-year period. Even if one were paid full price for food crops one day there was no way to ensure that the money would buy back the same quantity of food the next.



A shortage of straw or *tibn* developed as early as 1916 and certainly continued into 1918 because of the massive quantities taken for army use, and thus livestock also hungered.<sup>67</sup> British troops operated in a theater including the Canal Zone, the Sinai Peninsula, Palestine, and Mesopotamia. This army was still largely moved and served by animals that needed to eat. Egypt was nearby, and the shortage of Allied merchant and military shipping space rendered fodder from Egypt not only cheaper but also strategically superior to imported fodder.<sup>68</sup> Even today—given its relatively great bulk for value—straw is marketed locally, that is, within a governorate at the most.<sup>69</sup> As a consequence, straw shortfalls—like shortfalls in food—could not be made up by market mechanisms on a national level. Local closure to export would affect the shortage most directly. British requisitions and forced purchases exacerbated local situations. There are credible accounts of peasants being forced to buy straw on the open market to supply British demands for fodder at controlled prices, with the individual peasant making up the shortfall out of his own pockets.<sup>70</sup>

The argument so far is that exports early in the war and requisitions along with sales on the internal market to the government decreased significantly the food available in the countryside. This decline was far from bringing famine, but it was real enough to invite attempts by various sectors of the population to guarantee their own entitlements to food by whatever means they could. Peasants attempted to shift entitlement shortfalls to the cities, and (by extension) the poor in the cities would suffer the greatest decreases in their entitlements. State managers in the urban areas—and specifically the British military government—attempted to shift entitlement shortfalls back to the rural areas by forced purchases. Any peasants with direct access to physical commodities would attempt to maintain command over them. Peasants would undoubtedly know the minimum levels of edible commodities they had to keep on hand (or at least within a local region) to forestall absolute disaster. Their preferences for food and fodder for their animals were what economists call “lexicographically ordered,” which means that by late 1918 peasants did not wish to exchange food for money. Peasant retention of sufficient supplies depended upon sealing off local areas from government requisitions.

## II

The impact of Labour Corps recruitment in regard to both men and animals is more complex than it has been presented in the many existing accounts, which often focus on guesses about the dangers involved, or a primordial peasant unwillingness to leave Egypt, or on forced enlistment.

Service in the Labour Corps could be dangerous enough to make volunteering for the corps irrational. People did die, and it is hard to conceive of any payment offered by the British that would have made risking death worth it. Hundreds of camel drivers—to take only one category of many—died of exposure in Palestine in the winter of 1917, and there was “high mortality from exposure amongst Egyptian syces [drivers] during the winter months” in 1918 as well.<sup>71</sup> Avoiding Labour Corps service outside Egypt was a rational decision.

Three aspects of the choice regarding entry into the Labour Corps must be evaluated as they changed over time: the burdens and benefits including opportunity

costs to peasants, the macroeconomic effects of decreasing labor supply in the countryside, and the ways in which peasants entered the Labour Corps, which significantly altered their perceptions of whether and how to resist entry.

At the simplest level let us first consider the decision to enter the Labour Corps in terms of wages and then pursue the question in terms of the likely costs of being near the front as well as in light of changing conditions at home. British officials seem not to have understood the dynamics of recruitment into the Labour Corps in its intertemporal effects. Later analysts seem to have done no better. The most important aspect of Labour Corps recruitment—even if the wages it offered were quite good at the beginning—lay in its effect on the supply of local agricultural labor.

Before World War I, the small basins of Upper Egypt as well as regions of Lower Egypt functioned as largely independent labor markets with a multiplicity of employers and workers. When the state, a monopoly employer, entered these markets, it competed for unskilled labor, and its effect on the marginal cost of labor could not be offset by movements between the various labor markets. When the wages offered were sufficiently high, peasants left the narrow labor markets and the supply of labor shrank, causing both the local marginal and average prices of labor to rise. When the state returned to hire more labor, it had to pay not only higher marginal wages to new employees, but higher wages to all employees. Faced with a skyrocketing wage bill, the state might prefer to use coercion to secure labor.

This model suggests the emergence of a chicken game among suppliers of labor after the first round of play. It is to the advantage of any given worker to remain home while other workers go to the monopoly employer. The importance of economic and extra-economic incentives in regard to determining the outcome of the chicken game can rapidly take on the appearance of class war.

My proposal approximates conditions of supply and demand for labor in the Egyptian countryside, especially in Upper Egypt, during World War I. Nominal wages had been more or less constant in the period before World War I and real wages probably fell, because the supply of labor kept step with a rising demand for it.<sup>72</sup> Wage rates for 1914 were between 2.5 and 3 piasters a day. When the Labour Corps in 1915 and 1916 offered 4 piasters,<sup>73</sup> relatively clear and short contractual arrangements, and promises of work in relatively safe locations it was an attractive decision to join the Labour Corps. But it would be equally rational to change one's mind if these conditions changed.

By early 1918 the British Residency reported that Labour Corps recruitment was resisted because local wages had gone up—from 7.5 piasters to 19–20 for loading cotton, for example.<sup>74</sup> The army had already become aware of the chain reaction its demand on labor had effected on local markets, and in late 1917 the Labour Corps refused to raise wages because

they do not wish to create competition between Army and Civil employers of Labour. The War Office have made it very clear that they are very averse to such competition which would likely have the effect of producing a general rise in the cost of labour (resulting in the increase of the cost of agricultural products) without helping to bring in more men.<sup>75</sup>

Large landowners with connections to the palace had already begun to protest to the sultan that Labour Corps recruitment had increased their labor costs, and the Kom Ombo company—one of the largest employers of rural wage labor in Upper Egypt—also registered a complaint.<sup>76</sup> Local notables were known to be urging peasants to avoid the Labour Corps to keep their own wage costs down.<sup>77</sup> In September 1918, scarcity of labor in Upper Egypt was due to a higher price for wheat and the resulting high wages coupled with stories circulating about conditions in military field hospitals.<sup>78</sup> So high were rural wages that peasants avoided not only the Labour Corps, but work in the ports such as Alexandria, which had hitherto drawn peasants who could come by rail from Upper Egypt.<sup>79</sup>

Rising local wages were, of course, dependent on *some* people leaving and others staying. Those who left were better off than if no one left, but they were worse off than those who stayed behind. What occurs can be viewed through a simple game-theoretical analysis of a cooperation dilemma. Suppose cooperation means joining the Labour Corps, since by joining a peasant is cooperating with other peasants in maintaining a high local demand from which he himself will not benefit. Defection means not joining the Labour Corps, since by not joining a peasant is trying to make *another* peasant bear the cost of providing the public good of a tight labor market. In such a situation it was desirable for any particular peasant to create a situation such that either he cannot leave or some other peasant must leave.

The peasants had two options: to avoid recruitment or to shift it to someone else. To do the first they either fled or attacked the recruiters. To shift the burden to other peasants, they allied themselves with local officials to deflect recruitment away from themselves. Both strategies were tried. Peasants avoided markets and fled to the countryside. They also attacked the police. Up to 200 police were killed in Upper Egypt during the war years in incidents directly related to Labour Corps recruitment.<sup>80</sup> Clan vendettas were also used to shift Labour Corps recruitment away from one group and onto another. As Egyptians ceased to enter the Labour Corps voluntarily, ever harsher methods forced them into service. Men were jailed or kept behind barbed wire to ensure that they would not flee before they were sent out of the country, and the jails and detention camps were themselves then duly attacked.<sup>81</sup>

Resistance centered in Upper Egypt—especially the villages in the area of Malawi—and was extremely widespread as forcible recruitment replaced attractive wages. In Qanatreen in Menufia, the *umda* was stabbed; the village shaykh and the *ghafir* (guard) shaykh in Armant were shot and beaten in what became a village vendetta.<sup>82</sup> General Jellicoe knew of more than two dozen such incidents in the provinces.<sup>83</sup> Successful collective action (as opposed to individual acts of resistance) had to await some diminution of the repressive capacity of the state.

The requisitioning of animals, like the drafting of human labor, created economic problems for the peasants of which the British officials (who prided themselves on their policy toward the Egyptian animal population) were unaware. During the war they bought draft animals and then resold them on the open market at prices they considered reasonable. Camels, for example, were requisitioned early in the war at E £9–16 and resold three years later for E £20. British officials considered this more than fair because they believed the camels were in better

shape when they were resold.<sup>84</sup> Again, the British officials ignored the effects of intertemporal change.

Much of the fighting in the western desert, the Sinai peninsula, and Palestine required camels for transport as well as for fighting. In 1914 there were roughly 118,000 camels in Egypt.<sup>85</sup> The war had cut off the normal camel trade with the Arabian peninsula that had provided some 30,000 animals yearly. The British hoped to purchase 30,000 camels on the Egyptian market in 1915, but only managed to buy 13,000.<sup>86</sup> Over three years' time, however, the Camel Transport Corps alone would number 30,000 camels and 25,000 drivers.<sup>87</sup> It is not surprising therefore to discover a drop of about 15 percent in the number of camels in rural Egypt, a serious problem because they provided much of the haulage for farmers to local markets and to train connections to national markets.<sup>88</sup> Similar declines occurred among horses, mules, and donkeys, all of which were bought up by the British military, along with buffaloes and cows. Buffaloes presumably began to fetch higher prices as sources of meat than as work animals.<sup>89</sup> Peasants began to pay bribes of up to E £30 to keep their camels, which implies reduced draft power must have been a serious drawback indeed.<sup>90</sup> From the point of view of the peasants, British policy was perverse. Animals were taken off the market at fixed low prices thereby reducing supplies and sending free market prices up. They were later dumped back on the market at considerably higher prices when the net effect was to depress market prices.

In the end it was the poor and the politically defenseless who found themselves in the Labour Corps, just as it was the poor and the politically defenseless who suffered most from the requisition of commodities and animals. Thus, agrarian grievances rapidly assumed the character of class grievances and the tensions ignited by the war appeared as class tensions. Not all analysts appear to have recognized the real privation that underlay the antagonism to the wealthy. For example, either Schulze or his source has misunderstood the popular poem which begins "*Bardūn yā Wingate*" (Excuse us, O, Wingate).<sup>91</sup> As recorded in 1919 the poem begins as follows:

Excuse us, O, Wingate Our country is conquered: You took off the  
barley And camels and donkeys And a lot of wheat too Now leave us  
alone.

They asked for our help Good lord let them go see the governor  
Whose money is so great It cannot be counted Have pity on us—

O, you who have power You were too clever To go to the Dardanelles  
You, O, Maxwell You never saw disaster: Drink it now.<sup>92</sup>

III

The shortages of 1918 forced some Egyptians to protect—at the expense of other Egyptians or the British—their own access to foods for themselves and their animals. The entire economy and society of Egypt had been strained for the sake of the British war effort. Flight, the common remedy of peasants, became unavailing. To the degree that Egypt in general and Upper Egypt in particular still

retained the characteristics of the basin irrigation economy and was still made up of multiple local markets, the most rational strategy for peasants was to seal off their own local market for goods and labor as completely as possible.

If the reasoning and the narrative disclosed so far hold, then it is clear why peasants attacked the railways, the critical transportation link that tied the local economies to the large cities and the government: "In a country where there were few wheeled vehicles and hardly any metalled roads outside the large towns, the railways were almost the sole means of transporting produce such as cotton, sugar, cereals, and forage to the centres of consumption and the ports."<sup>93</sup> Unlike the Nile, which had provided the transport links between north and south in earlier periods, the single-track rail line could easily be cut, suspending the transport of edible commodities to the cities, which had little to offer the countryside in exchange. Many peasants still grew much of their own food and could survive some interruption of links to markets. The cities could suffer the shortages in cereals, pulses, sugar, and forage. Without a road system to supplement the single-track rail line, it was impossible to move either men or food out of local areas and difficult for the state to send its troops to subdue the provinces. Cutting the rails safeguarded localities from the central government.

Cutting rail lines and taking food, however, also suggests the limits on the kind of collective action undertaken in the 1919 revolt. Small groups of men who knew each other very well could cooperate to safeguard their own interests by uprooting tracks or looting a granary; the public good was a side effect. It would be a mistake to regard the large number of acts of sabotage carried out by individuals or very small groups as necessarily implying a widespread network of collective action. With one or two minor exceptions (of which both Chirol and Baer make far too much) no one thought of interfering with the irrigation system. Neither the peasants (who depended on it) nor the British army (which gave some thought to releasing a flood) seriously considered destroying the economic lifeblood of the country, which was, however, largely associated with British control.

Peasants also began to expropriate moveable and untraceable property—the cattle, sheep, fodder, and foodstuffs that had been amassed by the wealthy during the war. Many of the larger farms were owned by foreign capital but it was the attractiveness of their stored food, not the complexion of the owners, that led peasants to loot them. Looting was less risky and more rewarding than dividing the large estates, which peasants do not seem to have attempted. Evidence suggesting any division of estates is dubious, but reliable information regarding theft of edibles and animals by peasants during April in Mansura and Daqahliyya leave little doubt that theft, arson, and flight from estates occurred. In Dikirnis, Shirbin, and Dukmera, for example, daytime thefts of animals and provisions, and burning buildings are reported along with desertion of the laboring force.<sup>94</sup> There are essentially no references to damage to irrigation systems or to machinery. Lack of maintenance for pumping machines was the worst that happened during the two months of the most intense disturbances, aside from the decision of the British military authorities to draw down water dammed at Sawing which would normally have been used later in the year to keep the Nile high enough for easy navigation by the police and army.

The Peasant Revolt of 1919 centered mainly on preventing goods and men from being transported by the rail system. There was remarkably little violence against the British overall, with less in the countryside than in the cities.

Histories of World War I concentrate on French, German, or Russian affairs, but for Britain the Egyptian-Palestine theater was extremely important. They directed to it the second largest and second most expensive British army of occupation. British troops and Indian troops stationed in the area numbered 103,000 (split about 60/40) and cost more than £31 million.<sup>95</sup> It was, however, a front that had demobilized relatively quickly after the Armistice and in which, as a consequence, the apparent decline in strength of the British army was especially salient. Troop strength in Egypt had dipped when some 60,000 men were sent from Egypt to France after the German advances on the Somme and the Lys in March–April 1918.<sup>96</sup> These men never returned to Egypt, and British troops in Palestine were replaced by Indian troops.

British troop strength, then, while still greater than it had been before the war, nevertheless dropped noticeably, and few troops were stationed in the countryside by March 1919. After the revolt it was rapidly augmented by canceling the demobilization of men waiting to go home. Nevertheless, it probably appeared to many peasants and townsmen alike that the end of the war had dramatically decreased the ability of the British to maintain their rule in Egypt. The March uprising occurred in the context, therefore, not of peasants who wished to undertake a frontal attack on British troops, but rather of peasants who believed that the British would be able to muster relatively little force against them.

Even the Dairut incident, the one instance of mass violence directed at British army officers—and there was essentially only one—bears out the analysis presented here. The Dairut area was one in which some peasants were reliably reported to have had to purchase fodder on the open market to sell at controlled prices.<sup>97</sup> On 17 March 1919 train 89 left Luxor at 8:10 P.M. with two commissioned English officers, four noncommissioned officers, and one private on board.<sup>98</sup> Among them was Alexander Pope Bey, the inspector of prisons.<sup>99</sup> Everyone knew they were on the train. Whether Pope himself was known to the people in the Dairut area is uncertain, but it seems plausible that he was. Certainly hundreds of peasants in Upper Egypt had been imprisoned for resisting recruitment into the Labour Corps. At all events, the English soldiers were all riding together when their carriage was surrounded and attacked by local artisans—led by partners in a poultry business—and Pope was killed. Somewhat later peasants attacked the train and killed the other soldiers.

Disorderly as the situation was, neither the local artisans nor the peasants acted without some understanding of how the local representatives of the state would look at matters. It seems likely that the technical representatives of the Egyptian State Railway aided the crowds by disorganizing the train lines, that the local police and *markaz* authorities connived at the actions of the crowd, and it is clear that sixty Egyptian soldiers and officers returning from the Sudan made no effort to avert the attack. There is some evidence that local notables used state telephones to coordinate demonstrations.

The Dairut event was, however, exceptional. More common were incidents like one in Mansura, where on 12 March, local artisans took to the streets, overwhelmed

the police and even the British soldiers, and, as recounted by Fred J. Murdoch, British consular agent who remained in Mansura throughout the revolt, "destroyed the Consular Coat of Arms at my house and threw it into the river."<sup>100</sup> Murdoch also reported that local shops were broken into unhindered by prominent Egyptians who lived there. One of them, Muhammad Husayn Haikal, already an important figure in Egyptian politics, clearly saw local Mansura politics as too small an arena in which to fight for an Egyptian future governed by Wilsonian principles of independence.<sup>101</sup> Another prominent intellectual and political figure, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Rafi'i, had also lived in Mansura but had already left and took no part.<sup>102</sup>

## IV

Choosing to attack the transport system makes sense and by March 1919 peasants may have feared hunger. Why was the spark of the uprising the arrest of the Wafd leadership? Students went on strike on 9 March and were quickly followed by members of the Egyptian bar. On 11 March, members of the Attorneys' Syndicate met and voted to strike by becoming inactive members.<sup>103</sup> This amounted to a refusal to handle cases and made it impossible for the business of the state to be handled normally. The colonial state was fatally compromised when the local elite refused any cooperation with it after March.

At first, the state was paralyzed and the court system rapidly broke down, and it was then that peasants began to play a significant part in the revolt. The transport and communications system of the country fell out of the hands of the government agencies and the top political authorities as police, local army officers, employees of the Ministry of the Interior, and the employees of the rail lines ceded power to local demonstrators in situations as diverse as those described in Dairut and Mansura.<sup>104</sup>

A social conflict that resembled class war had broken out, but it did not go further because the peasants had already gotten much of what they wanted. Had the Wafd leadership wanted to extend the uprising, they might have offered land reform to the peasantry, but for practical and ideological reasons the Wafd generally declined to undertake such steps. The Wafd leadership were men of substance, not radical social agitators.

The British attempted to portray the situation as one on the brink of Bolshevik catastrophe:

Landowners and omdehs generally were reported seriously alarmed at the attitude of the fellaheen, the damage done to property, cattle lifting, danger to the water supply and the likelihood of further unrest. They were becoming exasperated with Cairo and the "effendi" agitators to whose activities their losses were attributable; while they were uneasy at the appearance amongst the fellaheen of what, from their point of view, they regarded as the worst symptom of Bolshevism, namely the proposal to partition large estates for the benefit of the small holders and landless.<sup>105</sup>

The peasants, however, do not appear to have had such grand plans nor would their immediate problems have been ameliorated had they held such designs. Peasants were neither secret Bolsheviks, nor as filled with hatred to the British as persons as the British were to the Egyptians:

If British influence and the British irrigation system were withdrawn from Egypt . . . thousands of acres would go out of perennial cultivation . . . the prosperity of the country would go down . . . and instead of perpetually increasing the food and cotton crops, you would have the same terrible state of affairs that you had in Egypt during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when things were more or less left to themselves.<sup>106</sup>

This claim, that the 20th century had been one of “perpetually increasing food crops,” is of course untrue. Consumption from the turn of the century had gone downward, and peasants and workers had good reason to believe that something was amiss in the political economy of Egypt in the first two decades of this century. This statement reveals the persistent contempt a portion of the British colonial bureaucracy felt toward Egyptians.

There was some divergence in British ranks about analyzing the revolt, however. British officials such as Lord Lloyd argued that the revolution did have some important economic roots but that the local Egyptian elite was as responsible (or at least as implicated) as the colonial establishment. My argument diverges from Lord Lloyd’s because he believed that it would be possible to substitute an imperial elite of British administrative officials for a local one. Lloyd’s explanation—and that of many colonial administrators including Captain Ormsby-Gore, whose views on the irrigation system I have cited—was essentially a rational-choice argument, albeit a very simple one. He argued that because the elite had not shared the privations of the war equally with the masses and in many instances had even benefited from those privations, no links between the two existed. Their interests—class interests we might say—were in opposition.

Even if we accepted Lloyd’s analysis, it would not follow that the colonial administration had shown any concern for the masses during the war. If anything, the colonial administration (Egypt had in effect been a colony since the Protectorate was established at the beginning of the war) had shown even more disregard for the immediate interests of rural producers during the war than the Egyptian elite had. The unequal distribution of entitlements in Egypt became a critical issue in 1919 because of decisions that were made by British officials to which everyone else reacted. Not for another thirty years would unequal distribution of entitlements within Egypt become a critical issue on its own terms, and even then it might be argued that the impact of World War II forced the issue.

Why were the bar and most of the middle class so opposed to Britain precisely at this moment? It seemed plausible to assume that the postwar peace conference would decide whether Egypt would become independent or become a fully colonial possession. Great Britain had secretly proposed to strip Egypt of what remained of her independence, although this was not known to most Egyptians at the time. The plan to integrate it into the imperial system proposed by Sir William Brunyate would have limited the power of the Egyptian elite and of ordinary Egyptians to affect the decisions of state. Brunyate’s proposal would have given foreign nationals resident in Egypt a veto power in the Senate whereby they could override any majority coalition formed by Egyptians.<sup>107</sup>

That Britain planned somehow to integrate Egypt fully into the imperial system was becoming clear. Wingate spelled it out in an interview with Sultan Fu<sup>c</sup>ad by



telling him that Allied recognition of the Protectorate had been “the knockout blow” to Egyptian hopes of independence.<sup>108</sup> Thereafter, hope of influencing state policy by electoral means would have been impossible, and the Egyptian social and political elite would have been pushed back towards colonial status. Thus, in early 1919 these individuals also felt more inclined to challenge the state, and their resolve may have been strengthened by their misperception that President Woodrow Wilson would come to their aid.<sup>109</sup> The war years had shown that the policies adopted by a colonial elite would place Egyptian interests—peasant, worker, or elite—well below the interests of the empire as a whole. The Egyptian social support for the state had been eroded during the war, and peasant conflict as well as elite dissension had broken out in revolutionary proportions.

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON, SEATTLE, WASH.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup>See, for example, Gabriel Baer, “Submissiveness and Revolt of the Fellaḥ,” in *Studies in the Social History of Modern Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).

<sup>2</sup>Valentine Chirol, *The Egyptian Problem* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1920), pp. vii–x.

<sup>3</sup>See Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt and Cromer* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), p. 206.

<sup>4</sup>See Dāwūd Barakāt, *Taʿalū ilā kalimat sawāʿ* (Cairo [?], 1919), p. 8, for a comparison of Egypt and Nigeria as colonial situations.

<sup>5</sup>ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Rāfiʿī, *Thawrat sanat 1919* (in two parts) (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1946).

<sup>6</sup>Leonard Binder, at least, seems to share this judgment: “The revolution of 1919 will bear much new scholarship and reinterpretation,” he writes in *In a Moment of Enthusiasm* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 38. The available literature has increased recently. See Muḥammad Anīs, *Dirāsāt fi wathāʿiq thawrat sanat 1919* (Cairo: Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop, 1963); ʿAṣīm Dasūqī, *Thawrat 1919 fi al-aqālim “min al-wathāʿiq al-bariṭaniyyah”* (Cairo: University Writer’s Press, 1981); Reinhard Schulze, *Die Rebellion der ägyptischen Fallahin 1919* (Bonn: Ballbek Verlag, 1981); Laṭīfa Muḥammad Salīm, *Miṣr fi al-ḥarb al-ʿālamīyyah al-ūlā* (Cairo: Egyptian Book Organization, 1984); Markaz Wathāʿiq wa-Tāriḫ Miṣr al-Muʿāṣir, *Shuhadāʿ thawrat sanat 1919* (Cairo: Egyptian Book Organization, 1984), introduction and conclusion by Nabil ʿAbd al-Ḥamid Sayyid Aḥmad. The most recent addition to the literature is Nathan Brown, *Peasant Politics in Modern Egypt: The Struggle Against the State* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990).

<sup>7</sup>Chirol, *The Egyptian Problem*, p. 134.

<sup>8</sup>Schulze, *Die Rebellion*. Schulze’s argument seems strange on its face. If the peasants never referred to Zaghlul as the Mahdī, then why should we assume that they regarded the movement he led as a new form of Mahdism? The peasants did refer to ʿAbbas Hilmi, the deposed Khedive, as a mahdi, which suggests that they rather clearly differentiated between a utopian future involving a mahdi and a more realistic—albeit quite radical—one with the Wafd. See for example FO 371/3711/12827 on the refusal of cloth merchants in Mansura to sell red cloth to European women because it would be needed for the near return of ʿAbbas, as well as popular poetry of the time which clearly refers to ʿAbbas in millenarian terms (FO 371/3714/467; see also n. 91).

<sup>9</sup>P. J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Egypt*, 3d ed. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985), p. 265. Vatikiotis quickly reverts to an explanation by irrationality, however, saying that it was natural for the peasants to explode.

<sup>10</sup>Salim subscribes at least in part to this thesis. See Salim, *Miṣr fī al-ḥarb*, p. 118. Brown provides a good picture of the degree to which British control and manipulation of the local market allowed them to succeed in this venture (Brown, *Peasants*, p. 199).

<sup>11</sup>Salim makes a rather different, and I think far more telling, point about anger regarding what were widely understood to be forced donations to the Red Cross. Forced contributions for the care of wounded soldiers were widely perceived as unjust in a population suffering from hunger and penury (*Miṣr fī al-ḥarb*, p. 273). In a somewhat different vein, Ṭāriq al-Bishrī makes the clearest case on this in *Al-muslimūn wa-al-aqbāt fī iṭār al-jamā'a al-waṭaniyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Wahda, 1982), especially in his characterization of Sa'ḍ Zaghlu's meeting with the press in Paris, pp. 134–35.

<sup>12</sup>See Avner Offer, *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 1.

<sup>13</sup>The war could place a severe strain on the Egyptian economy short of massive starvation. In Palestine, “the people of the towns were in severe distress, much cultivated land was left untilled; the stocks of cattle and horses had fallen to a low ebb,” according to *An Interim Report on the Civil Administration of Palestine* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1921), p. 3. Distress in Palestine arose from Ottoman seizure of food from the local population. Shibli Shumayyil cabled Theodore Roosevelt on 28 May 1916, warning of imminent starvation in Lebanon and Syria (I am indebted to Susan Ziadeh for sharing the fruits of her forthcoming dissertation with me on this point).

<sup>14</sup>See Alan Richards, *Egypt's Agricultural Development 1800–1980: Technical and Social Change* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1982), pp. 61–63.

<sup>15</sup>See Bent Hansen and Michael Wattleworth, “Output and Consumption of Basic Foods in Egypt, 1886–1968,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 9 (1978), 449–69 (see Fig. 3A on p. 462 of three-year moving averages of per capita consumption).

<sup>16</sup>See Brown, *Peasants*, p. 200.

<sup>17</sup>FO 371/20835, Brunyate (acting financial adviser) memorandum.

<sup>18</sup>FO 141/797/2689, Sir Archibald Murray, commander in chief of the Egyptian Expeditionary Forces, 23 May 1917.

<sup>19</sup>FO 848/5, Brigadier General Owen Thomas from Shafik Pasha, minister of agriculture.

<sup>20</sup>FO 368/1902/204712, a note from W. Ross Taylor for the Supplies Control Board, 9 November 1918.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>See Richards, *Agricultural Development*, p. 64, and FO 368/1902/204712 in 1918.

<sup>23</sup>Here I use “entitled” in its more or less ordinary sense. A more rigorous argument involving entitlements in the sense of the word used by Amartya Sen is suggested in n. 66.

<sup>24</sup>As Offer points out, getting food became an acute problem of survival for Germans during the war and formed a preoccupation of prewar British war planning. See “Food and the German State,” and “Fear of Famine in British War Plans,” in Offer, *The First World War*.

<sup>25</sup>See Frank M. Surfact, *The Grain Trade During the World War* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1928), pp. 18–19.

<sup>26</sup>See Great Britain, Statistical Department, Board of Trade, *Statistical Abstract for the Several British Overseas Dominions and Protectorates* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1924), no. 56.

<sup>27</sup>FO 368/1902/98510.

<sup>28</sup>See Paul de Hevesy, *World Wheat Planning and Economic Planning in General* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 429.

<sup>29</sup>FO 368/1902/129624, 24 July 1918; see also Chirol, *The Egyptian Problem*, p. 133.

<sup>30</sup>FO 368/1902/132092, 29 July 1918.

<sup>31</sup>FO 368/1905/98508, note sent 9 May 1918.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.; other statistical sources indicate imports had risen to about 70,000 tons annually in the immediate prewar period.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.; Wingate to Foreign Office, 4 May 1918; see also Richards, *Agricultural Development*, p. 127, and the *Statistical Abstract*.

<sup>34</sup>Lord Lloyd, *Egypt Since Cromer* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1933), pp. 244–45.

<sup>35</sup>See Richards, *Agricultural Development*, Tables 3.7 and 4.2.

<sup>36</sup>P. G. Elgood, *The Transit of Egypt* (London: Edward Arnold, 1928), p. 210; de Hevesy, *World Wheat Planning*, gives the five-year average for wheat and flour imports before the war as 19.8 percent of consumption and for the five-year period after the war as 21.6 percent of consumption. For the 1914–19 period, imports were only 5 percent of consumption and an *average* shortfall of 6.1 million bushels for the period 1914–19 appears, i.e., less than average human consumption for the preceding period. The situation worsened as the war continued.

<sup>37</sup>See Sir James Wilson, “The World’s Wheat,” *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 84,3 (May 1921), 329–78, esp. p. 336.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 338, 344.

<sup>39</sup>FO 368/2087/145707; see also Elgood, *Transit*, p. 227.

<sup>40</sup>FO 848/4, note by Sir Brunyate, p. 10, of the final report of the Milner Commission.

<sup>41</sup>Elgood, *Transit*, p. 227.

<sup>42</sup>See Felice Vinci “Cereales,” *Metron* 2 (1922), 196–226, (esp. pp. 201, 213).

<sup>43</sup>The use of cottonseed oil seems to have begun shortly after the turn of the century. The oil was used directly, and it was also the basis for a kind of margarine which began to replace butter among poorer Egyptians. See United States Department of Commerce and Labor, *Daily Consular and Trade Reports*, 48 (29 August 1910), 625.

<sup>44</sup>John Todd, “The Uses of Egyptian Cotton Seed,” *L’Egypte Contemporaine* 2 (1911), 209–21, esp. p. 210.

<sup>45</sup>Todd, “The Uses of Egyptian Cotton Seed,” p. 212.

<sup>46</sup>FO 368/1899/117883. Oil and sugar were in even scarcer supply than cereals, and by summer 1917 there was less than two weeks’ supply of sugar in the United Kingdom. It is surprising in this situation that Egyptian sugar was not taken. See Lord Bledisloe’s remarks on Wilson’s, “The World’s Wheat.”

<sup>47</sup>FO 368/1899/108846, 18 June 1918.

<sup>48</sup>FO 368/1899/123539, 14 July 1918.

<sup>49</sup>FO 368/1899/137255, 27 July 1918.

<sup>50</sup>FO 368/1899/137255, 27 July 1918.

<sup>51</sup>FO 368/1899/137255, 27 July 1918.

<sup>52</sup>FO 368/1899/200056, 3 December 1918.

<sup>53</sup>FO 368/1899/204669, 12 December 1918.

<sup>54</sup>FO 368/1899/204669, 12 December 1918.

<sup>55</sup>FO 362/1899/124200, 12 July 1918.

<sup>56</sup>FO 361/1899/156787 and 206303.

<sup>57</sup>*United States Commerce Reports*, 76 (1 April 1919), 18.

<sup>58</sup>FO 368/2089/39620, 12 March 1919.

<sup>59</sup>*Statistical Abstract*, no. 56.

<sup>60</sup>*United States Commerce Reports*, no. 76, 18.

<sup>61</sup>Dasuqi, *Thawrat 1919 fi al-aqālim*, p. 23.

<sup>62</sup>FO 848/4.

<sup>63</sup>See *Annuaire Statistique 1935*, “Mouvement de la population,” Table I, 1917–32 and Graph 1, “Naissances et décès declares.”

<sup>64</sup>FO 848/4 131605, Table VIII; the Cairene laborers’ diet was very high in grain. Of total consumption, 72.5 kilograms out of 88.71 kilograms were in wheat, maize, or bread for the better-off Cairene laborers. By December 1917 these accounted for over 65 percent of the food budget (up from 48% in February 1914).

<sup>65</sup>FO 848/4 131605.

<sup>66</sup>The argument so far is commonsensical. Those interested in a more formal presentation of the issues involved are referred to Appendix B of Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986). Sen’s “r”—the protected urban workforce food entitlement—here refers to the military and, thus, the peasant entitlement does *not* equal Sen’s  $q_2$  which is the total food peasants grow.

<sup>67</sup>As straw became scarce, animals began to compete with people for the cereal supply. See Major General L. J. Blenkinsop and Lieutenant Colonel J. W. Rainey, eds., *Veterinary Services*, Official History of the Great War (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1925), pp. 169, 222. By 1918 the straw shortage was so severe that army rations were limited to five pounds of *tibn* per animal per day.

<sup>68</sup>FO 371/423331: “Tonnage situation very bad and every ton of grain or fodder secured in Egypt went to relieve the necessity of importing supplies . . . no doubt we squeezed the country very hard.”

<sup>69</sup>See, for example, Nicholas Hopkins, *Agrarian Transformation in Egypt* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1987), pp. 148–52.

<sup>70</sup>See R. W. Brigstoke, “Grievances of Fellahin”: “I know of cases where men were obliged to provide more *tibn* than their land had yielded, having to buy the difference at PT 115 and supply it to the army at PT 50 per heml” (FO 848[3], 12 July 1919). Also Major G. W. Courtney, “Memorandum” (FO 848[3]): “Markaz Santa in Gharbiyya and Minuf in Minufiyya were unable to supply all the *tibn* required and had to buy at higher prices to supply it to the army at requisition [lower] prices.” Also a Major Allard is cited as reporting Upper Egyptian villagers who had to buy on the free market to meet requisition quotas (FO 848[3]).

<sup>71</sup>Blenkinsop and Rainey, *Veterinary Services*, p. 213 (for 1917), p. 230 (for 1918). *Syce* was the common transliteration of “*sāʿis*” or driver.

<sup>72</sup>Richards, *Agricultural Development*, p. 95.

<sup>73</sup>See for example Chirol, *The Egyptian Problem*, p. 136. He presents the peasants as largely rational actors before 1916, but thereafter ignores the effect of army recruitment on wages. A comparison of Chirol with Elgood and the private correspondence reveals the ideological intentions of Chirol’s book.

<sup>74</sup>FO 141/1797/2689, 6 May 1918. The American consul reported that wages for farm labor rose more than threefold, from 12.5 cents to 40 cents per day. See *American Consular Reports*, no. 112, (13 May 1919), p. 809.

<sup>75</sup>FO 141/797/2689.

<sup>76</sup>FO 141/797/2689, 13 May 1917.

<sup>77</sup>See, for example, the circular from Rushdi Pasha, interior ministry, to the provincial mudirs mentioning “certain notables” who spread rumors regarding the Labour Corps to keep wages down. Rushdi urges that the mudirs intervene to tell the peasants the truth and also that landowners be asked if they think wage rates in the countryside would decline if massive conscription were introduced (FO 141/797/2689, 24 August 1917). On 7 May 1918, Rushdi issued another circular (itself quoting a 21 October 1917 letter) to the effect that the ministry of the interior was aware “that some notables were for private purposes thwarting recruiting” and urging the local officials to recruit more vigorously under threat of punishment.

<sup>78</sup>FO 371/3199/170794 15 September 1918.

<sup>79</sup>FO 371/3199/170794, 6 May 1918. For the migration of workers from Upper Egypt to Alexandria, see Brown, *Peasant Politics*.

<sup>80</sup>Inspector Nizam Wise of the interior ministry admitted in testimony after the insurrection ended that he had lost more than 200 policemen or għafirs in the course of requisitioning grain or recruiting peasants into the Labour Corps. “But for these measures,” he commented, “he did not consider that it would have been possible to induce the people of Upper Egypt to rise” (FO 848/4; Sir Rennell Rodd’s “Summary of Evidence”).

<sup>81</sup>FO 141/797/2689, for an account of a village attack on a jail in which draftees were held in Daqahliyya. The same file also contains indications that as early as 1 May 1916, it was clear that many “volunteers” were already not volunteers, and in Bani Suwayf there were mass escapes from barbed-wire encampments by 27 May 1917.

<sup>82</sup>FO 141/797/2689; memorandum from the Ministry of the Interior to the High Command in Egypt, 21 May 1918.

<sup>83</sup>FO 848/4, 15 December 1919.

<sup>84</sup>Again, Allard in Courtney’s report FO 848(3).

<sup>85</sup>Samir Radwan, *Capital Formation in Egyptian Industry and Agriculture, 1882–1967* (London: Ithaca Press, 1974), Appendix A-6 (p. 265).

<sup>86</sup>Sir George MacMunn and Cyril Falls, compilers, *Military Operations: Egypt and Palestine* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1928) p. 93.

<sup>87</sup>MacMunn and Falls, *Military Operations*, p. 23.

<sup>88</sup>Radwan, *Capital Formation*, p. 265. In round numbers the decrease is from 118,000 to 95,000 in 1916 with a slight increase (to 99,000) in 1917.

<sup>89</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup>Oral presentations may differ greatly. In Schulze, p. 122, this poem is given as “Woe on us, Win-gate/Who has carried off corn/Carried off cattle/Carried off camels/Carried off children/Leaving only

our lives/For love of Allah, now let us alone.” Another version of the first stanza can be found in Barry Carman and John McPherson, eds., *The Man Who Loved Egypt* (London: Ariel Books, 1985), p. 150.

<sup>92</sup>FO 371/3714/467.

<sup>93</sup>MacMunn and Falls, *Military Operations*, p. 365.

<sup>94</sup>FO 141/747.

<sup>95</sup>See *Army Estimates of Effective and Non-Effective Services for the Year 1919–1920* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1919) in *Sessional Papers (Accounts and Papers)*, vol. 32 (1919), pp. 4, 9.

<sup>96</sup>Cyril Falls and A. F. Becke, *Military Operations: Egypt and Palestine* pt. II, *From June 1917 to the End of the War* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1930), pp. 413–14.

<sup>97</sup>See Allard, in Courtney’s report FO 848(3), who cites El Hawtat as the particular village in the area.

<sup>98</sup>FO 141/753/8940. The following paragraphs are all taken from this source, the report by J. Percival submitted 26 March 1919.

<sup>99</sup>Rafi‘i, *Thawrat sanat 1919*, pt. 1, p. 230, specifies that he was inspector of prisons for Upper Egypt.

<sup>100</sup>FO 141/747/8954.

<sup>101</sup>Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, *Mudhakkirāt fi al-siyāsa al-miṣriyya*, pt. 1 (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-miṣriyya, 1951) p. 80.

<sup>102</sup>Rafi‘i, *Thawrat sanat 1919*, pt. 1, p. 234; given accounts such as these; it appears more work needs to be done before we can assess claims about the degree of Wafdist organization behind the revolt.

<sup>103</sup>Rafi‘i, *Thawrat sanat 1919*, pt. 1, pp. 179–80.

<sup>104</sup>Afaf Marsot appears to be one of the few observers to have noticed the collaborative relationship between the Wafd and the government in March. See *Egypt Since Cromer*, pp. 205–6.

<sup>105</sup>FO 848 (10), army general headquarters historical summary of the revolt.

<sup>106</sup>*Official Reports of the House of Commons*, 20 March 1919, p. 2350. The speaker was ever congratulatory imperialist Captain Ormsby-Gore.

<sup>107</sup>The most concise rendition of the history behind Brunyate’s proposal and the terms of the proposal itself are in Rafi‘i, *Thawrat sanat 1919*, pp. 71–72.

<sup>108</sup>FO 371/1180. The account is contained in a message from Sir Reginald Wingate to Lord Cromer regarding an interview with the sultan on 12 December 1918. Fu‘ad “visibly blanched as I told him it was a case of ‘victor’ and ‘vanquished’” and remarked that the interests of 14 million Egyptians had to take precedence over those of 150,000 foreigners.

<sup>109</sup>Instructive in this regard are the telegrams addressed to Woodrow Wilson in 1919 that make up a large fraction of the White Book published by the Wafd. See *Egyptian Delegation to the Peace Conference: Collection of Official Correspondence from November 11, 1918 to July 14, 1919* (Paris: Egyptian Delegation, 1919).